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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001647

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AF/S FOR B. NEULING
SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/06/2015
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: SENATE TAKES OFFICE WITH SOME SURPRISE APPOINTEES
BUT NO AGENDA

REF: A. REF A: HARARE 001609
[B](#). REF B: HARARE 001296
[C](#). REF C: HARARE 001187

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Eric T Schultz under Section 1.4
b/d

Summary

[1](#). (C) The 66 members of the Senate took the oath of office on November 30, amidst little fanfare and low expectations. They adjourned the next day until December 13. Beyond reviewing and debating the budget bill (septel) it is unclear what will be on the Senate,s agenda when it resumes. In addition to the 43 ZANU-PF and seven MDC elected members (ref A), President Mugabe appointed six Senators and ten more came from the ranks of the traditional chiefs. The six Mugabe appointees include two surprising choices from the legal and women,s rights communities. Mugabe also resurrected two members of the ruling party old guard to fill vacant slots in his Cabinet. End Summary.

Senate Sworn In -- Adjourns

[2](#). (C) Clerk of Parliament Austin Zvoma on November 30 swore in the 66 members of the reconstituted Senate, following an election in which less than a fifth of eligible voters bothered to cast a ballot. As its first act, the body elected Edna Madzongwe, the former Deputy Speaker of Parliament, as its president. Naison Ndlovu, the ZANU-PF Secretary for Production and Labor and new Senator for

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Insiza, was elected as Deputy President. Replacing Madzongwe as Deputy Speaker of Parliament is the unimpressive Buhera South MP and ZANU-PF Secretary for Foreign Relations, Kumbirai Kangai (ref B).

[3](#). (C) In her opening speech, Madzongwe said that her nomination and the high number of women in the upper house (20 out of 66 members) demonstrated the progress that women have made in Zimbabwe. The director of the SUNY parliamentary support project, John Makamure, however, told poloff on December 1 that Madzongwe,s leadership did not bode well for the institution,s impartiality. While in the lower house she had often violated procedures to side with the ruling party.

[4](#). (C) The Senate met again December 1, at which time the government,s budget announced by Finance Minister Murerwa was introduced (septel). The Senators then adjourned until December 13. Makamure said that the Senators would be integrated into preexisting parliamentary committees as a way of quickly acclimating the new members. (Comment: Further calling into question the upper house,s independence and reason for being.) Makamure also said that the Senate had no real legislative agenda but speculated that the GOZ might introduce some legislation in that body first as a means to justify its reconstitution.

Senate Composition

[5](#). (C) In addition to the 50 elected members, Mugabe appointed six non-constituency Senators and named ten &traditional leaders8 (i.e. tribal chiefs) to the body. The chiefs can all be expected to toe the government line. However the six appointees are more of a mixed bag. In addition to the expected ZANU-PF insider/financiers there were two surprise choices of legal and civil society activists: Tazvitya Jonathan Mapfumo (a respected lawyer, who has worked on many women,s issues) and Sheila Mahere, the sole woman of the six non-constituency Senators.

[6](#). (C) Mahere is a particular surprise. She is a long-time Embassy contact and the director of Musasa Project, a Democracy and Human Rights Fund grant recipient that works

with battered women. In a December 2 conversation with poloff, Mahere professed to be surprised by her appointment, which she said was apparently supported by Vice President Mujuru and Minister of Women,s Affairs Muchinguri. She said she and her fellow Senators were aware of the criticisms levied against the institution and accordingly planned to work doubly hard to justify their positions. Mahere said she personally hoped to use her new role to advance gender issues, such as the long-shelved domestic violence bill. Noting that Mugabe needed legal minds in the Senate, she also suggested that she and fellow lawyer Mapfumo would likely form the backbone of the upper house,s contingent in the parliamentary legal committee.

Old Guard Retreads Reemerge in Cabinet

17. (C) Mugabe also moved this week to fill holes in his Cabinet with two ZANU-PF insiders. Sithembiso Nyoni, a two-time parliamentary loser, was renamed Minister of State for Small to Medium Enterprise, a position she had vacated earlier this year when she lost in the March election and Mugabe failed to appoint her to Parliament. The elevation of Madzongwe to Senate freed up space in the lower house for Nyoni. Meanwhile, newly-minted Senator Samuel Mumbengegwi was tapped to fill the top position at the Ministry of Indigenization and Empowerment left vacant by Josiah Tungamirai,s death in August (ref C). Like Tungamirai, Mumbengegwi is a member of the Karanga subgroup of the majority Shona ethnic group and hails from Masvingo.

Comment

18. (C) Mahere and the handful of other reform-minded Senators may be able to use their new positions to call attention to needed changes (see septel for bio details of potential reformers). However, we are skeptical)- as is all of Zimbabwe -- that the Senate as a whole will find a useful role to play in governing the country. As currently constituted the Senate will likely do little or nothing)- as Mugabe probably intended -) beyond snuffling up to the public trough.
SCHULTZ